



Fenton Physical Therapy

400 Rounds Drive
Fenton, MI 48430
(810) 750-1996

Linden Physical Therapy

319 S. Bridge Street
Linden, MI 48451
(810) 735-0010

Milford Physical Therapy

135 S. Milford Rd
Milford, MI 48381
(248) 685-7272

Count Scapula

The Cape Covers Up Some Scary Posture



Is that the highest you can raise your arms?

while driving his car and working at his desk. Jon was taking anti-inflammatory medications and had stopped playing golf, but the pain persisted. His posture was very slouched, and he had limited shoulder mobility. The most obvious deficit was that Jon did not move his shoulder blades when he moved his arms overhead or out to the side. Jon stated that he exercised at the gym and was discouraged that, at the age of thirty-five, he had developed this problem. We reassured Jon that his problem was fairly common, and that it would resolve with some changes in his posture and dedication to a proper training program.

Your shoulder girdle is made up of three bones--clavicle, scapula, and humerus. The scapula is more commonly called the shoulder blade and rests on the rib cage. Your shoulder blades are controlled by an elaborate weave of muscles that permit them to move across a large range of motion. They must rotate up and down and move back forth on your rib cage. They must also be able to lock in place to serve as an effective platform to control shoulder, trunk, and even pelvic motion. Proper movement of your scapula on the rib cage is a synchronous dance with the glenohumeral (shoulder) joint. Tight and weak shoulder blade muscles produce inappropriate

movement patterns that perpetuate pain.

Chopping, carrying, pulling, and overhead tasks have largely been taken out of our lives, so our shoulder blade muscles are rarely called on to work during daily tasks. Prolonged sitting and computer work tightens the muscles in the front of the shoulders. Many of the training activities performed in the gym hold the shoulder blades down against a bench or exercise machine and restrict shoulder blade motion. The fitness devotion to all things pectoral and limited training time on the other side of shoulder girdle creates muscle imbalances. This results in the forward head, rounded shoulder posture so common in the average office worker and visitors to physical therapy clinics. Training that directly activates the muscles that control the shoulder blades is a good idea for anyone interested in functional strength and better appearance.

Lesson One: Foam Roll "T"s

Tightness in the front of the shoulder and neck is at epidemic levels. Over the last three years I have treated numerous, fairly young patients with amazing levels of restriction. I attribute this postural devolution with the rise of texting, computer gaming, and facebook following. You have to be able to get your scapulas back to their appropriate position on the rib cage to create better shoulder function. This drill will stretch out the front of the shoulders and restore appropriate cervical posture.



Position supine on a foam roll. The head, spine, and hips should all be supported. Bring the arms out to the side so that the elbows are even with the shoulders and bent to 90 degrees. Let the shoulders relax and permit gravity alone to pull the arms toward the floor. Attempt to keep the forearms parallel to the floor and the elbows at 90 degrees. Let the shoulders sink into the stretch for 20 seconds and then bring the elbows together in front of your body. Your elbows and forearms should eventually get down to the floor. Repeat for three to five repetitions.

Lesson Two: Bat Wings



You have to be able to pull the scapulas back and hold them tight against the rib cage to sustain a

stable platform for functional shoulder joint motion. The muscles that perform this motion tend to become weaker as we age. Isometric scapula retraction strength is restored with the bat wing exercise.

Get a pair of dumbbells or kettlebells and place them on either side of a flat bench. Lay face down on a flat bench. Grasp the weights and pull the weights up and try to put your thumbs in your armpits. The exercise is named for the position of the upper arms and back during the isometric hold. Keep the eyes facing down and do not extend the neck. Hold this position for at least five seconds. Lower the weights and rest for an equal amount of time and then perform another isometric hold. Perform five isometric holds and, as you get stronger, increase the duration of the hold from five seconds to ten seconds. Perform two or three sets of bat wings. Common mistakes are extending the neck, not fully retracting the shoulder blades because the weight is too heavy, and failing to hold for a sufficient time period. You should feel the muscles tighten between the shoulder blades and not in the neck.

Lesson Three: Serratus Push Ups

The serratus anterior is a giant, fan-shaped muscle that you use a lot as a baby (crawling) and rarely as an adult. It runs from your rib cage to the scapula and, when it is working properly, it holds you upright, athletic, and attractive.

Get into a push up position. Place the palms on the floor with the fingers and thumb forming a diamond position. Set up so that the hands are located directly below your face. The elbows stay straight and the



neck does not move. Move the body up and down using the motion of the shoulder blades retracting and protracting.

Try to aggressively push the shoulder blades forward (protraction) and push the upper back toward the ceiling at the top of the motion. The amount of movement during a serratus push up is eight to twelve inches. Perform eight to twelve repetitions.

Lesson Four: Suspension Trainer Rotational Rows

Physical therapist Gary Gray, an expert on functional fitness and rehabilitation, describes the connection of the scapula to the rest of the body as the “peltrunkula”. In throwing and racquet sports, your shoulder girdle directly influences the function of the opposite side’s hip. Olympic lifters and power lifters spend hours training the connection of the scapula muscles to the rib cage, spine, and pelvis. My favorite scapula connecting exercise is the suspension trainer rotational row.



Set up a suspension trainer such as a TRX or Jungle Gym with one strap. Start with your dominant hand (lets say the right) and grip the handle. Position the feet forward of the body and tighten up the abdominal and gluteal muscle. Lean back and hold the right hand close to the rib cage. Open up to the left and allow the right shoulder blade to move as the torso rotates to the left. Keep the hips up and the torso stable. Pull back to the starting position with the right arm using a rowing motion. Perform five to ten repetitions on each side.

After three weeks of manual therapy and exercise, Jon was pain free and able to return to golf. His shoulder blade mobility was better but still less than ideal. He continued a home exercise program and greatly modified his fitness routine. Jon returned four weeks later for a home exercise program update and demonstrated full shoulder blade mobility.

-Michael O'Hara, P.T., OCS, CSCS



Video for these exercises can be seen at:
http://youtu.be/urE2t-NP_UM

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

-Antoine de Saint-Exupery

One of the first questions I ask during a fitness assessment at the gym is “*What are your goals?*” Very few have clearly thought out and/or set realistic health and fitness goals for themselves. Typical responses come in the forms of “*lose some weight*”, “*tone up*”, or “*get stronger*”.

I have found that in order to be successful, you must set SMART goals. This acronym stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-based. If you have set a goal in your life (whether or not it is fitness related), and it is missing any of these components, the odds of achieving it are greatly reduced. People with clearly defined goals are more committed and, therefore, less likely to get sidetracked or give up completely. By making your goal specific and measurable, you give yourself a clear target upon which to focus your attention and effort.

An example of a SMART goal would be to lose 50 lbs.,

drop 5% body fat, and increase deadlift by 30 lbs. First, be sure your SMART goal is realistic and attainable to avoid setting yourself up for failure. Next, attach a timestamp to your goal to create a sense of urgency. This will help you stay on track and stick to your plan each day.



A SMART goal is not a quick fix and, despite what the media tell us, reaching fitness and nutrition goals safely takes significant time and thought. It's easy to succumb to our fear of failure by creating goals that can be adjusted to allow for our weaknesses. It's not easy to commit. Do not be afraid to set big goals for yourself. We can offer the guidance you need to set and meet your SMART health and fitness goals.

-Jeff Tirrell, B.S., CSCS

Breathing Easy

One Member's Fight to the Finish Line



Cynthia Sargent joined Fenton Fitness a little over a year ago at the prompting of her niece, Wendy Kozlowski and her husband John, both members. At the time, she was driving down to Troy Beaumont twice a

week for pulmonary rehab and was hoping to find a place to do cardio a little closer to home.

Cynthia had been intermittently active in her lifetime, but was never consistent. Over time, she put on weight and suffered from breathing problems and other health complications. At 71, she was just steps away from COPD and an oxygen tank. Cynthia's first walk from the parking lot to the front desk at Fenton Fitness took such effort that she had to rest on a bench in the entry way. She was guided into her assessment and given an exercise program to work on during her 30 day trial. Cynthia established a consistent routine throughout the month and her health improved enough that she decided to join us for full membership, no longer needing to drive south for rehab.

“I took control of my eating and exercise, and the rewards have been many. I am more active and energetic, and I sleep better. I have improved my balance and mobility and am stronger and more flexible. I feel like a new person!” Every other day, Cynthia can be found working out in the gym. “I like Program Design because I feel it's better to have a professional trainer directing my routine in order to see results. I never feel intimidated by other people working out and always find the members and staff to be helpful and friendly.”

Most of us take breathing for granted, but it is Cynthia's biggest motivator. “I know if I stop exercising, I will revert back to where I was, dependent on medication and unable to walk very far. My breathing has improved so much that I have been released from my pulmonary doctor and am off all breathing meds. I feel stronger and have lost weight. My knees are much better, and I can get up off the ground without help.”

We congratulate Cynthia on her determination to make a difference. This summer, she completed two 5K races. Instead of accepting her declining health, she fought it and now enjoys the rewards of breathing better and walking farther which has improved her overall well-being. Don't just wish. Set a goal and make a plan. Success will follow.

-Amy Warner, Director of Sales and Marketing

404 Rounds Drive
Fenton, MI 48430
810-750-0351



Hours
Mon-Fri: 5:30am-9:00pm
Sat-Sun: 8am-3pm

Cuff Links

A Simple Exercise to Improve Shoulder Function

The human shoulder is one of the most mobile joints in the animal world. The shoulder is made up of four joints that must work together as a team whenever you throw, punch, reach, push, or pull. Exceptional muscle coordination and control is necessary to produce pain free and efficient shoulder movement. Healthy shoulders possess equal amounts of mobility (movement) and stability (no movement) strength. Most fitness programs involve plenty of isotonic movements such as presses, rows, and lateral raises but very little isometric stability activity. Developing better isometric shoulder strength is the missing link in most training programs. One of the best activities to develop greater shoulder isometric strength is an exercise called the *Bottoms Up Kettlebell Carry*.

BOTTOMS UP KETTLEBELL CARRY

Why You Should Do It

The task of balancing an unstable upside down kettlebell while you walk creates a reflex activation of the rotator cuff and scapula stabilizer muscles. This exercise teaches your shoulder girdle muscles how to work as a team. The repetitive shoulder stress of throwing, swimming, and overhead racquet sports often leads to the development of muscle imbalances in the shoulders. The bottoms up kettlebell carry will train away those imbalances.

Back injury specialist Dr. Stuart McGill calls this exercise one of the best core stability exercises. Many athletes and fitness clients have difficulty keeping the neck relaxed when they use the shoulder muscles. This exercise will help resolve this bad movement habit.

Performance

Choose a light kettlebell. Position the kettlebell in a bottoms up position with the shoulder flexed approxi-

mately 85 degrees. This should place the upper arm in front of the body and the elbow just below the shoulder. Grip the kettlebell handle firmly and try to keep the biceps from working too hard. Keep a tight and tall cervical posture and perform a steady walk of 25 yards. Do not allow the lower back to arch and keep the front of the rib cage flat. Switch the kettlebell to the other hand and walk back twenty-five yards. Perform two or three walks with each shoulder of twenty-five yards. I like to use this exercise as a warm up before strength training sessions for athletes and as a stabilization exercise for physical therapy patients.



Regressions and Progressions

If you do not possess the grip strength to hold a kettlebell in an inverted position, you can start with a dumbbell. As you get better at the exercise try to walk further. Work up to forty-five seconds of brisk walking on each side. Resist the temptation to use a heavier kettlebell.

-Michael O'Hara, P.T., OCS, CSCS



Video demonstration of the bottoms up kettlebell carry can be seen at:
<http://youtu.be/uW8n-AA6ZJs>

Join Our Email List



This newsletter, published monthly, is available by email. If you would like to be added to our email list, simply give your email address to any staff member or send your request to barb@fentonphysicaltherapy.com. You will receive the newsletter, as well as updates on events at our physical therapy clinics and fitness center.